
VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ASPEN FALES SHOULDER WIDENING PROJECT

Mono County, California

US 395

Postmiles 88.4 to 91.6

EA 09-349400 [09-1200-0033]

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California Department of Transportation
Landscape Architecture
District Nine



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Visual Impact Assessment



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VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT of the proposed ASPEN FALES SHOULDER WIDENING PROJECT

US 395 Mono County

PM 88.4 to 91.6 - EA 09-349400 [09-1200-0033]

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended (NEPA) establishes that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and *aesthetically* (emphasis added) and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 U.S.C. 4331[b][2]). To further emphasize this point, the Federal Highway Administration in its implementation of NEPA (23 U.S.C. 109[h]) directs that final decisions regarding projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts, including among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values. This Visual Impact Assessment was prepared using a process developed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in conjunction with the American Society of Landscape Architects. This process for assessing visual impacts satisfies the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state “with...enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities” (CA Public Resources Code Section 21001[b]). This report analyzes and discloses potential project affects consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) definitions and guidelines.

The intent of this visual impact assessment is to substantiate findings presented in the environmental document by acting as a technical support document. This assessment defines the visual environment of the project area, quantifies the visual resources of the project area, and identifies viewer response to those resources. The study assesses the resource change that would be introduced by the project and the corresponding viewer response to that change. This perceived change, along with the project’s consistency with national, state and local visual resource policy is used to determine the degree of potential impacts.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is to reduce accidents and increase safety on this section of U.S. Highway 395. This would be carried out by providing additional shoulder width for motorists and maintenance crews to pull off of the traveled way as well as greater space for non-motorized travel.

The project proposes to widen shoulders from 2 to 3 feet to a standard of 8 feet on U.S. 395 in Mono County, from 0.3 miles north of Devil's Gate Summit (PM 88.42) to Burcham Flat Road (PM 91.55). The project would also include the installation of rumble strips, removal of obstructions from the clear recovery zone, provide for extension/upgrade of drainage structures and the correction of the super-elevation at one horizontal curve located from PM 91.25 to PM 91.55. Drainage structures such as headwalls and wingwalls would include pedestrian safety railing.

Aside from the No-Build alternative alternative, the project proposes three project alternatives, with three project options. The key difference between the three alternatives and options is focused in the area of the Devils Gate rock outcropping which is located between PM 88.8 and 89.5.

Features Common to All Alternatives

All alternatives include the following operational and safety improvements:

- Widen shoulders to eight feet.
- Install shoulder rumble strips.
- Headwalls and wingwalls (with pedestrian safety railing) will be constructed at post mile 90.47 (Fales Hot Creek) to reduce fill in the channel and minimize disturbance to wetland habitat and riparian vegetation.
- For the entire length of the project new sides slopes will be constructed beyond the paved shoulders. Throughout a large portion of the project limits, paved shoulders can be constructed within the existing unpaved maintained shoulder area without requiring embankment to be placed beyond the existing hinge point. Slopes will be 4H:1V (horizontal: vertical) or flatter where there are no sensitive resources such as wetlands, riparian vegetation, or archaeological sites. Where sensitive resources exist, new embankment slopes will be steeper than 4:1 to minimize or avoid disturbance.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 proposes to cut into the Devils Gate rock formation at postmile 89.1 to allow for standard width shoulders and the creation of a rock catchment area. The rock cut alternative has three options which cut into the rock face at varying depths and angles.

- Option A would cut the rock formation back 20 feet from the edge of traveled way and have a near vertical face.
- Option B would cut the rock formation back 25 feet from the edge of traveled way and the vertical surface would have a 0.5:1 cut slope.
- Option C would avoid cutting into the rock at the base of the existing cut, however the top of cut would extend back approximately 100' and face would have a 1.5:1 cut slope.

Removal of the rock will likely require blasting although the contractor may choose to use other hard rock excavation techniques. To create a more natural looking rock cut the following techniques may be used:

- Over-blasting – yields a blocky irregular (non-planar) surface.
- Rock staining – mimics the coloration and patina of the adjacent (undisturbed) oxidized rock surface.
- Sculpting – yields a non-planar surface.

Alternative 2

This alternative shares the same features of Alternative 1 with the exception of between PM 89.0 and PM 89.4 the highway will be realigned to avoid the rock outcropping at PM 89.1. Three different options are proposed for Alternative 2 as follows:

Alternative 2 Option A

Realign the highway between approximately PM 89.0 and PM 89.4 (2,550 feet) to avoid having to excavate the rock outcropping at PM 89.1. The maximum offset from the existing highway would be at PM 89.2 where the new roadway centerline would be about thirty eight (38) feet south of the existing roadway centerline. To facilitate the realignment the existing curve to the south of the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 will be lengthened, a new curve created south of the outcropping, and the existing curve to west will be shortened.

- All superseded pavement will be removed and the roadbed graded and re-vegetated.
- By avoiding the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 the roadway will encroach into wetlands to the south of the existing highway, between PM 89.1 and 89.3.
- The proposed clearance from the edge of north-bound travelled way to the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 is fourteen feet.

Alternative 2 Options B and C

Realign the highway between approximately PM 89.0 to PM 89.3 (1540 feet) to avoid having to excavate the rock outcropping at PM 89.1. To facilitate the re-alignment; the existing curve to the south of the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 will be lengthened, a new curve created at the outcropping, and a new tangent will conform to the existing curve to west which will be shortened. Option B would realign the curve approximately 10 feet south of the existing roadway, and Option C would realign the curve approximately 7 feet south of the existing roadway.

- All superseded pavement will be removed and the roadbed graded and revegetated.
- By avoiding the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 the roadway will encroach into wetlands to the south of the existing highway, between PM 89.1 and 89.3, but encroachment will be much less than with Alternative 2 Option A.

Alternative 3:

This alternative shares the same features of Alternative 1 with the exception of between PM 88.8 and PM 89.24 where the highway will be realigned to avoid excavation of the rock outcropping at PM 89.1. Some of the specific physical features proposed for this alternative include:

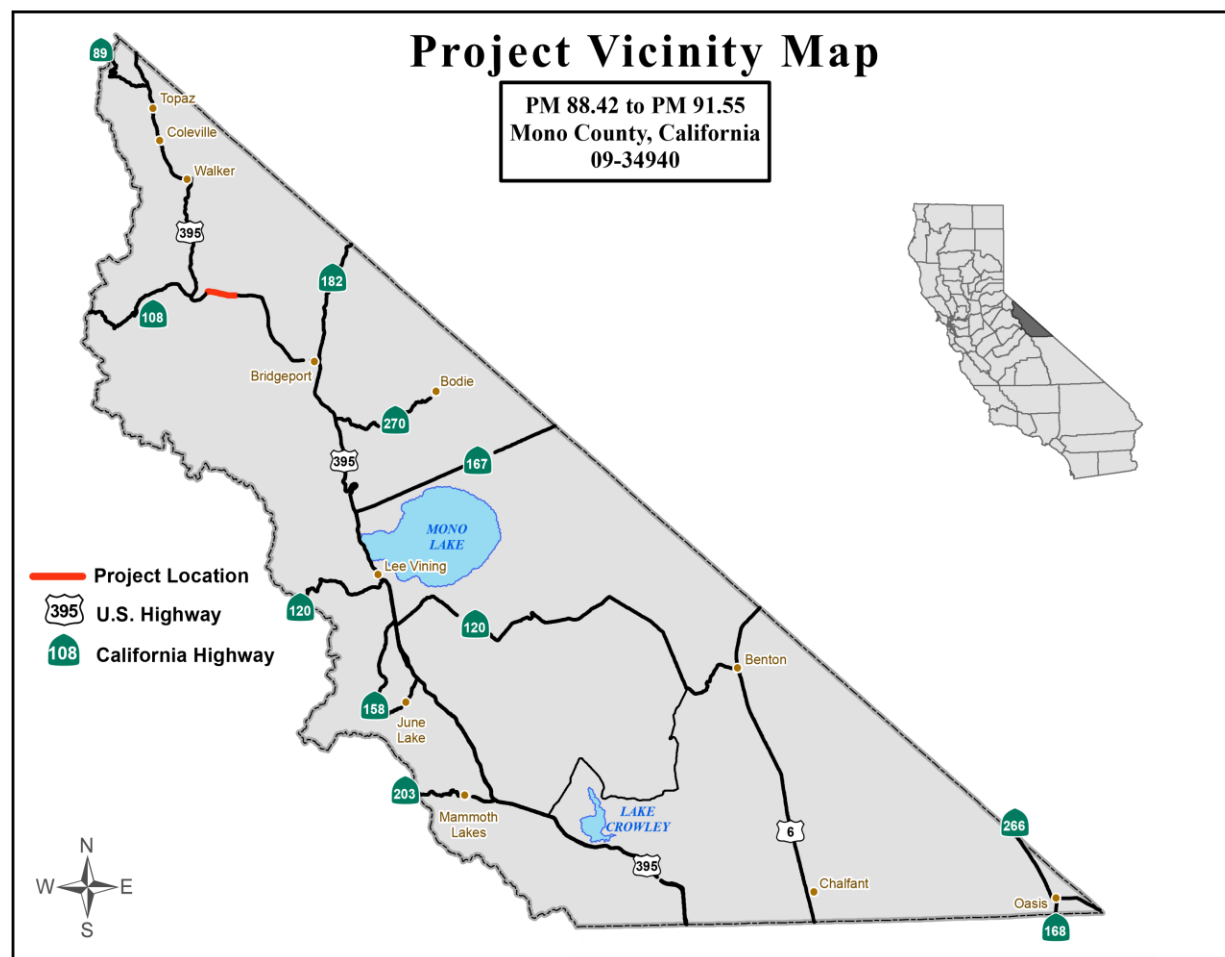
- Realign the highway between approximately PM 88.8 and PM 89.24 (2,160 feet) to avoid having to excavate the rock outcropping at PM 89.1. The maximum offset from the existing highway would be at PM 89.0 where the new roadway centerline would be about twelve (12) feet south of the existing roadway centerline. To facilitate the realignment; the existing curve to the south of the rock outcropping at PM 89.1 will be relocated approximately 300 feet to the east. A 0.5 degree shift in the alignment at PM 89.1 will guide the realigned highway back to conform to the existing highway at the beginning of the next curve north of the outcropping at PM 89.24.
- Proposed clearance from the north-bound edge of travelled way to the rock at the outcropping (PM 89.1) is fourteen feet.
- The realignment will move the roadway about twelve feet closer to the aspen grove and talus field at PM 89.0. It will require removal of several of the aspens closest to the highway.
- The realignment will disturb less wetlands than the realignment proposed by alternative 2.

1.3 EXISTING VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

Project Setting

US Highway 395 through the project area is a conventional two lane highway with 12-foot wide lanes and an average of 2 to 3 foot wide shoulders. The highway facility within the project limits is rural in nature with standard roadway signage, regularly spaced tall thin vertical orange snow poles and occasional paved and unpaved pullouts. US Highway 395 is the primary north-south corridor in the Eastern Sierra region and connects Southern California with Western Nevada, Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington State. It serves local, regional and interregional traffic which includes local residents, tourist and recreational visitors, military transport and commercial trucking. The portions of US Highway 395 which travel through unincorporated areas within Inyo and Mono Counties have been officially designated as the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway. Most of the lands surrounding the project are managed by the US Forest Service as part of the Toyabe National Forest with some rural residential properties adjacent to the highway.

The eastern portion of the project is located in the narrow Huntoon Valley which is surrounded to the north and south by steep jagged mountains. These slopes are often broken up by large rock formations rising above jagged talus slopes. Shrub lands and scattered pine forests are established where there is adequate soil coverage. The roadway experiences a narrow chokepoint where the near vertical face of the Devils Gate rock formation (PM 89.1) terminates across the roadway from the steep forested slopes of an adjacent mountain. West of Devils Gate, the roadway enters into a broad shrub land covered valley surrounded by the mountains of the Sierra Nevada Range. Throughout the project limits, the roadway occasionally abuts up to the edge of poor to moderately vegetated road cuts. All existing roadside cut slopes in the project limits except for the rock outcrop have an average grade of 2:1.

Figure 1 – Project Vicinity Map**Existing Visual Character**

The mountainous Northern Mono County marks the transition between the Sierra Nevada Range and the Great Basin. To the west, mountains dramatically rise up to the Sierra Crest then slowly descend towards the Central Valley. To the east is the State of Nevada and Great Basin which extends into Utah. The Great Basin is composed of north-south trending steep to relatively steep mountain ranges separated by flat basins which lie two to three thousand feet below the highest peaks.

Like many of the roads east of the Sierra Crest Sierra and throughout the Great Basin, US 395 was constructed parallel to the mountain ranges where the valley floors are predominantly flat in topography. This allows for long and straight stretches of highway surrounded by high mountains that often rise 10,000 feet above the roadside. Throughout most of Mono County, US 395 is located in a portion of the Sierra Nevada Range that extends eastward into Western Nevada with an average elevation of 7,000 feet. In the mountainous region, the roadway winds its way through varying

width shrub covered valleys which often provide expansive views of the surrounding snowcapped mountains.

The project limits extend from the Devils Gate Summit and the Huntoon Valley north through a narrow area known as the Devils Gate rock formation then enters into the broad Wheeler Flat valley. This zone marks the transition between the pine forested Sierra's and the sagebrush covered hills and lowlands of the Basin and Range landscape. The northern and eastern slopes are vegetated by the Pinyon pine – Juniper woodlands and the valley floors and slopes most exposed to the sun supports mostly mixed shrub land which contains dense patches of waist high shrub species with unvegetated gaps between clusters of plant mass. Riparian woodlands and grasslands is the dominant ground cover along Hot Creek which is located in the Wheeler Flat valley near the western limits of the project.

Most of the viewshed is managed by the US Forest Service and undeveloped however there are several rural residential properties to the west of the Devils Gate rock formation. They include a small ranch with a network of split rail fencing and the remnants of the historic Fales Hot Springs Resort. Although the original resort building is no longer in existence, concrete foundations of the old soaking pools are still visible at the base of the adjacent hillside within view of the roadway. Due to the low height of the shrub lands, views of and from the highway and these residences are mostly unobstructed.

Visual Quality

The quality of the existing visual environment through the project area is very high. The scenic mountainous terrain covered with a combination of waist high shrub lands with patches of tall pine forests provide for a mix of focused and expansive views of the surrounding landscape. The Devils Gate rock formation acts as the main focal point and provides a visual doorway for travelers entering the narrow Huntoon Valley towards the east and the wide open Wheeler Flats to the west.

Landscape Assessment Units

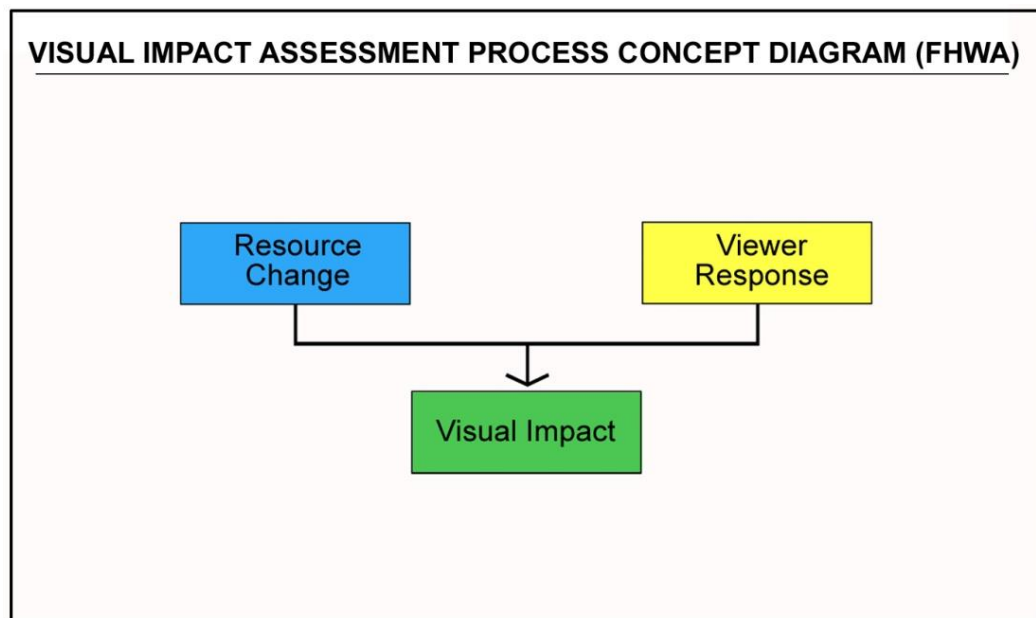
To provide a framework for understanding and disclosing the potential visual effects of highway project alternatives, the FHWA visual methodology recommends the regional landscape be divided into analysis sub-units. Landscape Assessment Units are not based on jurisdictional boundaries such as city or county limits, but rather are based on distinct areas or zones which have certain common visual characteristics. Landscape Assessment Units or “Units” divide the project into manageable segments that may share visual attributes, potential project affects, and if necessary, impact reduction strategies. The visual resources of Landscape Assessment Units can be assessed, compared; and assigned priorities for planning, siting, and design decisions.

The general landform and vegetative cover throughout the project limits are visually consistent, and no atypical visual features are present, and it is expected that most casual observers would perceive the project limits as being somewhat homogeneous throughout its length. As a result, this report analyzes the project setting as one single landscape unit.

1.3.1 Analysis Methodology

This study employs an analysis model developed by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in conjunction with the American Society of Landscape Architects. The major components of this process include establishing the visual environment of the project, assessing the visual resources of the project area, and identifying viewer response to those resources. Those components define the existing or baseline conditions. Resource change introduced by the project and the associated viewer response is then assessed, providing a basis for determination of potential visual impacts. Visual impact is a function of assessing the extent of physical change (resource change), and comparing that with the degree of viewer sensitivity (viewer response). A generalized visual impact assessment process is illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 2. Visual Impact Assessment Process Concept Diagram



VISUAL RESOURCE CHANGE

The physical changes caused by the project manifest themselves in mainly terms of form, line, color and texture, as well as the associated relational aspects of scale, dominance, diversity and continuity. These inherent physical attributes are visually experienced as an integrated whole, defining the perceived visual character of the landscape. How these attributes relate to one another and their

setting is assessed in part by analyzing what is defined in the FHWA methodology guidance as the view's *vividness, intactness and unity*. These three visual rating criteria are described as follows:

Vividness is the visual power or memorability of the landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.

Intactness is the visual integrity of the landscape and its freedom from non-typical encroaching elements. If all of the various elements of a landscape seem to "belong" together, there will be a high level of intactness.

Unity is the visual harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity represents the degree to which potentially diverse visual elements maintain a coherent visual pattern.

In order to assess the degree of resource change caused by the project, the FHWA method recommends a numerical rating process which compares the visual quality in terms of vividness, intactness and unity (described above), of both the existing and proposed conditions for each project alternative and option under consideration. Separate Resource Change (RC) evaluations were conducted from each of the four representative Observer Viewpoints. A numerical rating between 1 and 7 was assigned for the visual quality of existing conditions from each viewpoint, with 1 having the lowest value and 7 the highest. Photo simulations were then prepared illustrating the likely appearance of each view after project construction. After a combination of field reviews and photo simulation study, numerical ratings were then assigned to each of these "proposed" views. The numerical difference, if any, between the existing and proposed conditions quantifies the degree of resource change which may occur as a result of the proposed project. Table 1 below illustrates a range of visual resource change ratings and the corresponding narrative descriptions of the ratings:

The Resource Change evaluation determines which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view, and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a numerical change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing visual quality.

Ultimately, the degree of resource change (as determined by the Resource Change evaluation) must be combined with the anticipated viewer response in order to understand and determine potential levels of visual impact.

1.3.2 Viewer Response

To understand and predict viewer response to the appearance of a highway project, we must know something about the viewers who may see the project and the aspects of the visual environment to which they are likely to respond. We can differentiate major viewer groups by physical factors that modify perception. For highway projects, we begin with the basic distinction of the views from the

road, and the views of the road, as well as the physical location of each viewer group, the number of people in each group, and the duration of their view. The receptivity of different viewer groups to the visual environment is not equal. This variable receptivity is defined as *viewer sensitivity* and is strongly related to visual preference. It modifies visual experience directly by means of viewer activity and awareness; indirectly, sensitivity modifies experience by means of values, opinions, and preconceptions.

Viewer response assumptions include consideration of viewing proximity, duration of views, activity while viewing, and overall viewing context. Local values based on visual preferences, historical associations, and community aspirations and goals are also important indices of predicting viewer sensitivity and response to change.

Local policy indicators

Public policy concerning the established visual character of the regional landscape are important factors in assessing the baseline values ascribed to the setting. These community-based goals serve as an essential tool for predicting the likely reaction that changes resulting from the proposed project would evoke from the viewing public. The project is entirely within the County of Mono. Scenic resource goals and policies are discussed in the General Plan as follows:

Mono County General Plan - Conservation and Open Space Element

Section 4.10 in the Mono County 2015 RTP and General Plan Draft EIR discusses Aesthetics, Light & Glare and Scenic Resources. This section discusses issues concerning aesthetic and scenic resources in Mono County as well as efforts to minimizing light and glare to protect the quality of nighttime views. The General Plan identifies Scenic Combining District Land Development Regulations which regulates building color and materials, landscaping, grading, vegetation removal, topography, ridgeline construction, lighting, fencing and screening in a manner consistent with the purpose and goals of the scenic highway programs. All development within 1,000 feet of a scenic highway is subject to provisions of the Scenic Combining District.

Section 4.10 discusses Scenic Highways and identifies 389.8 miles of adopted Scenic Highways in Mono County which are designated under Federal, State and County level. It identifies portions of State Route 14, US 395 and State Route 89 including the portion of the highway within the project area as part of the historic El Camino Sierra Scenic Byway. This corridor began as a trail in the 19th Century then improved and paved as part of the major California road building era during the 1930's. "El Camino Sierra has been advertised to the world as a highway to showcase the natural beauty of California as far back as 1910". Devils Gate Pass was identified as one of the key landmarks in the route description. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra_Highway).

Devils Gate Summit and the Devils Gate Rock formation were elements identified as part of the *US Highway 395 Visual Resource Assessment* prepared by the Mono County Planning Department in 1998. This VRA was a supporting document used during efforts to add the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway into the California Scenic Highway System. On June 5th, 2000, US 395 was designated as a Scenic Highway on the California Scenic Highway System. The key group responsible for developing the scenic highway was Coalition for Unified Recreation in the Eastern Sierra (CURES). CURES included members representing state, federal and local governments, local chambers of commerce and businesses along the US 395 corridor.

Mono County Scenic Byway Project.

In 2012, Mono County received a grant from the National Scenic Byways Program to develop a *Highway 395 Corridor Management Plan* that would identify and develop enhancement opportunities to preserve and promote the scenic and recreational values along a 100-mile stretch of US 395 through the entire length of Mono County. As noted by Caltrans in its NOP comment letter, the National Scenic Byways Program has since that date been discontinued and replaced by the ‘Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (‘MAP-21’). However, the County had previously set aside funding to support completion of the National Scenic Byway Program designation. While funding for future Scenic Byway projects may not be available at this time in MAP-21, the National Scenic Byways designation itself has significant ongoing value for tourism, and will play a role in influencing travelers’ route selection decisions and thereby increase visitation to Mono County. The Mono County Economic Development Element cites results of a survey of US 395 travelers who visited Mono County, wherein 43% indicated they were much more likely to use a route that was a national scenic byway. An additional 52% indicated that they were ‘somewhat more likely’ to use a national scenic byway route, and only 6% of respondents were less likely. For these reasons, the County is continuing its efforts to complete the designation process. (Mono County 2015 RTP & General Plan Update Draft EIR – page 4.10-5).

Scenic Road Designations

5.10.10 Designation of Scenic Roads

US 395 within the project limits is designated as the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway within the California Scenic Highway System. Public vistas from this road shall be afforded the highest level of protection.

Viewer groups

Two general viewer groups were considered for the evaluation of viewer response; those with views from the road and those with views of the road. The awareness of visual resources by these viewer

groups is expected to vary with their specific activity. Tourists and recreationalists, which comprise a high number of viewers on US 395, generally have a high awareness of the visual resources around them, yet are anticipated to be less sensitive to specific changes in that environment. Residents who live along the US 395 corridor between Reno and Bishop are generally the most sensitive to aesthetic changes due to their familiarity as well as their personal investment in the area. Commuters are often familiar with an area however the repetitive nature of the activity reduces awareness of the visual experience. In general, highway users in motor vehicles will perceive the area as a cumulative sequence of views and may not focus on specific roadway features. Pedestrians and bicyclists can be very aware of their visual surroundings because of the duration of views, slower pace and viewing proximity.

Viewers from the road are comprised of the US 395 user. The viewers along this segment of the highway are primarily in commercial vehicles, recreational vehicles and personal vehicles. Although bicycle activity can be common during the summer months, pedestrian activity is not as common except the occasional local resident. US 395 provides for a variety of local, regional and state-wide uses. Commuters, freight movement and commercial vehicles, tourism and recreational travelers are part of the group experiencing the area from the highway. While travelling on the highway at the posted speed limit of 65 miles per hour, the project would be potentially visible for approximately 3 minutes. According to 2014 traffic counts, an average of more than 2,890 vehicles pass in front of the project location on US 395 each day.

Viewers to the road are made of all those who can see the project or any of its components from off-highway locations. Although much of US 395 is surrounded by undeveloped state and federally managed land, there is some rural residential properties which are mostly located in valleys adjacent to the highway. Between the Devils Gate rock formation and the Hot Creek overcrossing, there are approximately 6 residences located on both sides of the roadway. There are also signs of public access along Hot Creek including swimming in a small warm water pool at the Hot Creek overcrossing and along the creek which is populated with fish. The western portion of the project is visible from Burcham Flat Road which provides access to area recreational activities. Due to the low average height of the sagebrush scrublands, project elements would be visible from these residences and recreational areas.

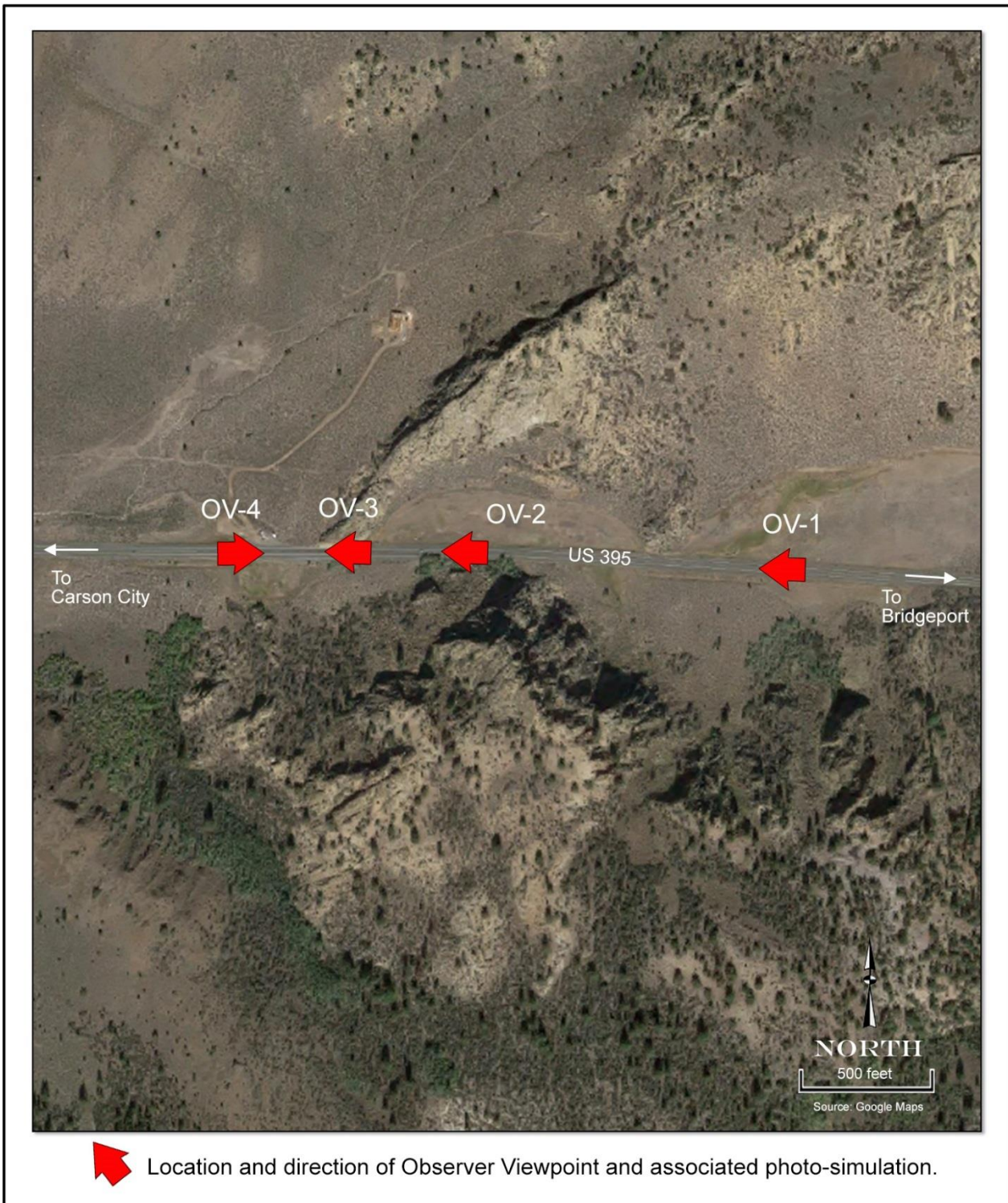
1.3.3 Viewer Sensitivity And Response Ratings

Based on the high visibility of the Devils Gate rock formation immediately adjacent to the highway, along with the substantial number of potential viewers, the project site is considered to have a very high degree of visual exposure to the public. US 395 has been designated as the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway within the California Scenic Highway System. Aesthetics, Light and Glare and Scenic Resources are also discussed in the Mono County General Plan Draft EIR. Mono County

The Draft EIR notes the termination of the National Scenic Byway program and develops efforts that Mono County can address to protect the scenic nature of US 395. As a result, this report applies a high numerical Viewer Response Rating (6.3) throughout the project's length.

1.3.4 Observer Viewpoints

Consistent with the FHWA guidance, representative viewing locations, called Observer Viewpoints (OV), were selected which best disclose the visual character and changes resulting from implementation of the project. Four viewing locations were selected, three looking northbound toward the work location, and one looking southbound. Observer Viewpoint locations are shown in Figure 3 on the following page:

Figure 3 – Observer Viewpoint Location Map

1.4 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The following section contains the numerical ratings assigned to the existing and proposed views as seen from each Observer Viewpoint (OV), along with a brief explanation of the rating numbers. Photographs of the existing conditions along with photo-simulations of the project are included to provide a basis for understanding the visual changes proposed by the project.

Consistent with the process shown in Figure 2, the following section analyzes the project in terms of the numerical difference in physical change (Visual Quality Evaluation rating) combined with the expected sensitivities and responses of potential viewer groups (Viewer Response rating). The Visual Quality Evaluation rating is combined with the Viewer Response rating, with the results providing the basis for understanding and determining the type and extent of potential visual impacts.

For the purpose of this study, project Alternative 2, Options A, B and C are analyzed and rated as one, under the heading of Alternative 2. Alternative 2 Options A, B, and C are only slight variations of this road realignment alternative, with no difference between them regarding their effect on primary scenic resources such as the rock formation, existing aspen trees, or surrounding views.

OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 –From US Highway 395 looking westbound from near the eastern end of the project limits.**OV-1 Existing Condition**

Observer Viewpoint 1 is considered to be of high baseline visual quality. From this viewpoint, the traveler has the best view of Devil's Gate where the highway travels through a very tight pass framed in by the Devils Gate rock outcropping on the right and the large predominantly rock mountain on the left. This narrow 'gate' was a familiar visual landmark dating back to the 1800's. In the distance are framed in views of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The vividness or memorability rating is high since this view is unique and well known along the US Highway 395 corridor in Mono County. Many travelers are quite familiar with this particular view and location. The visual intactness is high since there are no non-typical visual elements present. The unity rating is also high because the view and combination of natural elements maintains a coherent visual pattern. This location is a popular stop for passing photographers.

- Vividness – (6.4) - The view from this location is highly memorable due to the unique geological form of the Devils Gate rock formation on the right and the cluster of trees on the left

which mimic the form of the rock outcropping. These two features frame in views on the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the distance.

- Intactness – (6.3) - Except for the roadway, several orange snow reflector poles and highway signage, all the visual elements in the landscape including the rock formation, cluster of trees and distant mountains fit together into a pleasing view.
- Unity- (6.4) - As a whole, the landscape has a harmonious visual quality due to the composition of shapes such as the curved edges of the rock formation and cluster of trees, vanishing point of the roadway surface and rounded shape of the distant mountains.

OV-1 Alternative 1 - Option A (Vertical Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness - (6.0) - The vividness would decrease. From this distance the relationship between the rock and cluster of trees on the left would still be memorable, however the cutting-back of the rock formation away from the edge of the roadway and the unnatural vertical look of the rock face would create a less unique natural feature.
- Intactness – (6.1) - The intactness would decrease slightly due to the engineered appearance of the cut rock face and its increased distance from the edge of pavement.

- Unity – (6.2) - The visual harmony of the view from this location would be slightly reduced since the rounded form of the cluster of trees and the changes in the form of the rock outcropping from rounded to vertical would affect the visual balance between the two objects.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 ALT 1 OPT A		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Proposed	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.1
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT A
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT A
Resource Change (RC)	-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.3

OV-1 Alternative 1 - Option B (0.5 to 1 Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (5.9) - Vividness would noticeably decrease because of the size of the rock cut that is visible from this distance. The angle of the proposed rock face would affect the relationship between the rounded cluster of trees and existing rounded rock formation, which contributes to the existing memorability as seen from this location.
- Intactness – (6.0) - The visual integrity would be affected by the excavation of the rock creating a flat engineered look on what is otherwise is a mostly natural landscape.
- Unity – (6.0) - The harmony between the curved grouping of trees which is mimicked across the roadway by the curved rock formation would be negatively affected by the longer and flatter surface of the proposed cut.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 ALT 1 OPT B		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Proposed	5.9	6.0	6.0	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.4

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT B
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT B
Resource Change (RC)	-0.4
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.4

OV-1 Alternative 1 - Option C (1.5 to 1 Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (5.4) - The vividness would be most impacted by the magnitude of the proposed rock cut. From this viewing distance, the rock outcropping would be cut to an angle that would appear similar to a normal roadway cut slope, making it less memorable to passing travelers.
- Intactness – (5.5) - The intactness would be noticeably reduced by the flattening of the rock slope, creating a large manmade form and texture visible in the natural landscape.
- Unity – (5.4) - The unity would be greatly decreased since the compositional make-up of the rock formation would no longer visually balance with the rounded cluster of trees and the other organic forms in the view.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 ALT 1 OPT C	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Proposed	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.4
Visual Quality Difference =				-1.0

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT C
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-1 ALT 1 OPT C
Resource Change (RC)	-1.0
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.7

OV-1 Alternative 2 – Options A, B and C (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.4) - The memorability would remain the same since the rock face and cluster of aspen trees at the base of the mountain would not be affected.
- Intactness – (6.3) - Intactness would remain the same since roadside elements including the cluster of trees and rock formation would remain. There would be few unexpected built elements added to the visual experience.
- Unity- (6.4) - Unity would remain the same. Current visual conditions include the cluster of trees on the left, and rock formation on the right, which are fairly close to the edge of the road.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 ALT 2 Options 1, 2 &3		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Proposed	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Visual Quality Difference =				0.0

Viewer Response (VR) Rating		OV-1 ALT 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Viewer Response (VR)		5.0

Visual Impact Rating		OV-1 ALT 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Resource Change (RC)		0
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) $= [(Absolute\ value\ of\ RC) + VR] / 2, \text{ with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.}$		0

OV-1 Alternative 3 – (Avoid Rock Cut and Wetlands) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.4) – As seen from this somewhat distant viewpoint the memorability would remain the same since the rock face would not be affected and the removal of trees closest to the roadway would be mitigated by the remaining cluster of trees closer to the base of the mountain.
- Intactness – (6.3) - Intactness would remain the same since roadside elements including the cluster of trees and rock formation would remain. There would be few unexpected built elements added to the visual experience.

- Unity- (6.4) - Unity would remain the same. Current visual conditions include the cluster of trees on the left, and rock formation on the right, which are fairly close to the edge of the road. Removal of a few of these trees would not be noticeable from this viewing distance and angle.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1 ALT 3	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Proposed	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4
Visual Quality Difference =				0.0

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-1 ALT 3
Viewer Response (VR)	5.0

Visual Impact Rating	OV-1 ALT 3
Resource Change (RC)	0
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) <i>=[(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.</i>	0

OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 –From US Highway 395 looking westbound from approximately 300 feet from the Devils Gate Rock Formation.

OV-2 Existing Condition



Observer Viewpoint 2 is considered to be of high baseline visual quality. The mass of trees to the left and the similarly shaped rock formation on the right focus a narrow view of the mountains in the distance. The vividness or memorability rating is high since this view is unique and well known along the US Highway 395 corridor in Mono County. Many travelers are quite familiar with this particular view and location. The visual intactness is high since there are few non-typical visual elements present. The unity rating is also high because the forms and balance of natural elements maintain a coherent visual pattern.

- Vividness – (6.2). This view is highly memorable due to the unique geological form of the Devils Gate rock formation on the right, and the cluster of trees on the left which mimic the form of the rock outcropping. These two features also tend to frame-in views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the distance.

- Intactness - (6.3). Except for roadway features, the landscape including the rock formations, groupings of trees and distant mountains is generally free from non-typical visual elements.
- Unity – (6.4) – As a whole, the landscape has a harmonious visual quality due to the balanced composition of shapes such as the curved edges of the rock formations and cluster of trees, the vanishing point of the roadway surface and rounded forms of the distant mountains.

OV-2 Alternative 1 - Option A (Vertical Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.0) – The vividness would slightly decrease slightly. From this distance the relationship between the rock and cluster of trees would still be memorable however the cutting back of the rock formation away from the edge of the roadway, and the engineered, near-vertical look of the rock face would create a somewhat less unique natural feature.
- Intactness – (6.0) – The intactness would decrease slightly due to the engineered cut of the rock face and its increased distance from edge of pavement.
- Unity – (6.1) – The visual harmony of the view from this location would be slightly reduced since the changes in the form of the rock outcropping from rounded to vertical would affect the visual balance between the rock and the trees seen on the left.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 Alt 1 Opt A	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.3
Proposed	6.0	6.0	6.1	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt A
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt A
Resource Change (RC)	-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.9
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.6

OV-2 Alternative 1 - Option B (0.5 TO 1 Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (5.8) – Vividness would be decreased due to the angular and engineered rock cut. Rock excavation would affect the relationship between the existing rounded cluster of trees and rounded rock formation which make the existing views from this location memorable.
- Intactness – (5.7) – The visual integrity would be affected by the excavation of the rock, creating a flat engineered look on what is otherwise is a mostly natural landscape. Cutting the rock back 25 feet from the edge of pavement would affect the narrow visual chokepoint that made this location a landmark.
- Unity (5.8) - The compositional harmony between the rounded grouping of trees on the left and mimicked across the roadway by the curved rock formation would be negatively affected by the longer and flat surface of the proposed cut. There would no longer be a similar rounded form between the two features.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 Alt 1 Opt B		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.3
Proposed	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.8
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.5

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt B
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt B
Resource Change (RC)	-0.5
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.4

OV-2 Alternative 1 - Option C (1.5 TO 1 Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (5.3) – Compared to the other rock cut alternatives, Option C would have the greatest effect on the vividness, due mostly to the size of the rock-cut face. The rock outcropping would be cut back to an angle that would appear similar to standard roadway cut slopes and would no longer be memorable to passing travelers.
- Intactness – (5.4) – The intactness would be noticeably reduced by the flattening of the rock cut, introducing a large manmade form and texture into the natural landscape.
- Unity – (5.4) – The unity would be reduced since the compositional make-up of the rock formation would no longer visually balance with the rounded cluster of trees seen in the mid-ground.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 Alt 1 Opt C		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.3
Proposed	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.9

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt C
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-2 Alt 1 Opt C
Resource Change (RC)	-0.9
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.6

OV-2 Alternative 2 - Options A, B and C (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.0) – The memorability would remain nearly the same since the rock face and Aspen trees would not be affected.
- Intactness – (6.1) – Intactness would remain generally the same since other than the slightly wider paved shoulders, other roadside elements including the cluster of trees and rock formation would remain. There are few noticeable constructed elements added to the visual experience.
- Unity – (6.1) – Unity would remain the same. The cluster of trees and the rock formation would remain close to the roadway and would continue to define the spatial composition of this view.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.3
Proposed	6.0	6.1	6.1	6.1
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.2

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-2 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-2 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Resource Change (RC)	-0.2
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.3

OV-2 Alternative 3 – (Avoid Rock Cut and Wetlands)- Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (6.0) – The memorability would be reduced somewhat since the rock face due to the removal of trees closest to the roadway on the left.
- Intactness – (6.1) – Intactness would remain generally the same since other than the slightly wider paved shoulders, other roadside elements including the cluster of trees and rock formation would remain. There are few noticeable constructed elements added to the visual experience.
- Unity – (6.1) – Unity would be slightly decreased due to the removal of the row of trees closest to the roadway. Current conditions include the cluster of trees and rock formation, the edges of which are close to the edge of the road. The removal of some of the trees closest to the edge of pavement would alter the spatial composition of this view.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2 Alt 3	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.3
Proposed	6.0	6.1	6.1	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating		OV-2 Alt 3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3

Visual Impact Rating		OV-2 Alt 3
Resource Change (RC)		-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.		-3.3

OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 –From US Highway 395 looking west adjacent to the Devils Gate Rock Formation

OV-3 Existing Condition



Observer Viewpoint 3 is considered to be of high baseline visual quality. The rock formation on the right provides the dominant visual and spatial element from this view. Its rounded form is somewhat

similar to the small somewhat rocky and partially vegetated hill seen on the left. These two elements frame-in partial views the Sierra Nevada mountain range in the distance. The vividness or memorability rating is high since the rock formation, its geologic textures and its close proximity to the US Highway 395 corridor is rather unique. Many travelers are familiar with this particular view and location. The visual intactness is high since there are few non-typical visual elements present. The unity rating is also high because the view and combination of natural geologic elements combine with interesting sagebrush scrubland groundcover, resulting in a coherent visual pattern.

- Vividness – (6.3) – Vividness from this viewpoint is very high. The combination of the close proximity of the rock on the right, contours of the hills to the left and the scenic nature of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the distance creates a highly memorable experience.
- Intactness – (6.3) – Intactness is very high due to the variety of mountainous terrain and lack of encroaching and uncharacteristic visual elements.
- Unity – (6.3) – The unity rating is also very high. The combination of visual elements including the adjacent rock face, rolling hills and distant mountains unhindered by trees create a pleasant balance of fore, mid, and background composition.

OV-3 Alternative 1 - Option A (Vertical Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.1) – The vividness is slightly reduced by the cutting of the rock back farther away from the roadway, which would alter the spatial quality of the view. The vertical cut would help retain some of the existing spatial characteristics. For the traveling public the engineered rock-face would appear less interesting than the natural, weathered surface of the existing rock. These

impacts to memorability would be slightly mitigated by the increase in views of the mountains in the distance.

- Intactness – (6.0) – The intactness would be slightly reduced by the introduction of the new large, engineered rock-cut into the otherwise natural landscape.
- Unity – (6.0) – The unity would be reduced to some degree since the somewhat rounded, organic characteristic of the existing rock face would be replaced with an engineered, geometric plane . Views of the distant mountains would slightly increase, helping retain some of the visual unity of the scene.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 Alt 1 Opt A	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Proposed	6.1	6.0	6.0	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-3 Alt 1 Opt A
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-3 Alt 1 Opt A
Resource Change (RC)	-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.3

OV-3 Alternative 1 - Option B (0.5 TO 1 Rock Cut) - Proposed Condition

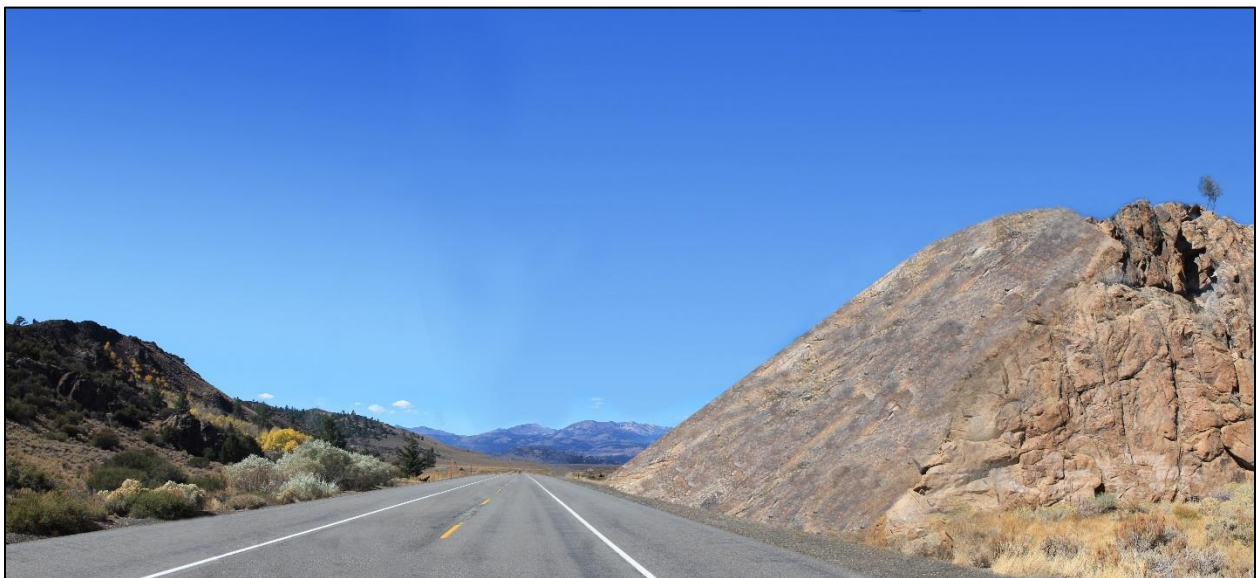
- Vividness – (5.8) – Some degree of memorability would remain, however the vividness would be decreased due to the farther viewing distance and less-interesting, engineered look of the rock face.
- Intactness – (5.9) – The visual intactness would decrease due to the introduction of the highly visible engineered rock face in this predominantly natural landscape.
- Unity – (5.8) – The unity rating would be reduced as the angled slope and engineered look of the rock formation would no longer mimic the more organic topography of the other mountains within the viewshed.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 Alt 1 Opt B		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Proposed	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.5

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-3 Alt 1 Opt B
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating		OV-3 Alt 1 Opt B
Resource Change (RC)		-0.5
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) $= [(Absolute\ value\ of\ RC) + VR] / 2, \text{ with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.}$		-3.4

OV-3 Alternative 1 - Option C (1.5 TO 1 Rock Cut - Proposed Condition)



- Vividness - (5.2) – The vividness would be noticeably reduced due to the larger surface area of the rock cut. The new contour line of the rock would be less memorable since it would appear similar to standard roadside cut slopes along the highway corridor.
- Intactness – (5.5) – The intactness would be noticeably reduced because of the visibility of the engineered, geometric form of the cut-slope into the otherwise mostly natural viewshed.
- Unity – (5.9) – Some of the visual unity would remain since the flatter slope would somewhat mimic the contours of the hills to the left, and a greater percentage of the distant mountain range would be visible. However the geometric form of the large cut slope would be inconsistent with the more organic, natural shapes seen in the surrounding landscape.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 Alt 1 Opt C		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Proposed	5.2	5.5	5.9	5.5
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.8

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-3 Alt 1 Opt C
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-3 Alt 1 Opt C
Resource Change (RC)	-0.8
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.6

OV-3 Alternative 2 - Options A, B and C (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.2) – The vividness would remain similar to the existing condition as the only changes would be the addition of the wider shoulders, minor earthwork and road realignment.

The rock formation, as the primary visual element would remain the same with a high level of memorability.

- Intactness – (6.3) – The intactness would remain the same since there would be no alterations to the rock formation and few other signs of human modification.
- Unity – (6.3) – The unity rating would remain the same since the rock formation on the right and the mountains to the left would continue to support the unified appearance of the natural landscape. In addition the composition of the landforms would still frame-in views of the distant mountains ahead.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Proposed	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.3
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.0

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-3 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-3 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Resource Change (RC)	0
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	0

OV- 3 Alternative 3 – (Avoid Rock Cut and Wetlands) - Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (6.2) – The vividness would remain similar to the existing condition as the only changes would be the addition of the wider shoulders, minor earthwork and road realignment. The rock formation, as the primary visual element would remain the same with a high level of memorability.
- Intactness – (6.3) – The intactness would remain the same since there would be no alterations to the rock formation and few other signs of human modification.
- Unity – (6.3) – The unity rating would remain the same since the rock formation on the right and the mountains to the left would continue to support the unified appearance of the natural landscape. In addition the composition of the landforms would still frame-in views of the distant mountains ahead.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3 Alt 3	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Proposed	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.3
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.0

Viewer Response (VR) Rating		OV-3 Alt 3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3

Visual Impact Rating		OV-3 Alt 3
Resource Change (RC)		0
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) $= [(Absolute\ value\ of\ RC) + VR] / 2, \text{ with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.}$		0

OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 –From US Highway 395 looking east from approximately 300 feet west of Devils Gate Rock Formation.

OV-4 Existing Condition



Observer Viewpoint 4 is considered to be of high baseline visual quality. There are four key geologic landforms within this view. In the foreground is what is historically known as the Devils Gate where the highway travels through a very tight pass framed in by the Devils Gate rock outcropping to the

left and the higher, predominantly rock mountain on the right. In the middle ground behind the Devils Gate is a rock formation similar in geology and form to the Devils Gate rock outcropping. In the distance is a partial view of the Sweetwater Mountains. The vividness or memorability rating is high because of the combination of interesting geologic textures and clear view of the Devils Gate Narrows. Many travelers along US 395 are quite familiar with this particular view and location. The visual intactness is high since there are few non-typical visual elements present. The unity rating is also high because the view and combination of natural geologic elements combined with a mix of sagebrush scrubland and grove of aspen trees adjacent to the roadway provides for a coherent natural visual pattern.

- Vividness – (6.4) – Vividness from this viewpoint is very high. From this angle the close proximity of the rock formation on the left, larger mountain immediately across the roadway to the right and views of a similar but smaller rock formation in the middle-ground and distant mountains makes for a highly memorable visual experience.
- Intactness – (6.3) – Intactness from this viewpoint is also very high. The majority of the visual elements from this viewpoint support the natural and rural character seen throughout the region, and human development is visually subordinate to the natural landscape.
- Unity – (6.2) – Unity from this viewpoint is very high. The composition from this view consists of natural complimentary elements such as rock formations, mountains and native vegetation with the linear roadway leading into the central vanishing point.

OV-4 Alternative 1 - Option A (Vertical) - Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (6.1) – The vividness rating would decrease. The interesting texture of the existing rock formation would be cut back to a flat vertical surface. This would affect the unique character of the view and the memorability of the setting.
- Intactness – (6.0) – The intactness would decrease with this option. Although most of the visual elements are natural features, the flat engineered look of the vertical cut slope would introduce a new built element and detract from the existing setting.
- Unity – (6.0) – The unity of this view would be reduced slightly due to the flat vertical cut into the rock formation. The shape and profile of the proposed cut would be visually inconsistent with the more rounded and organic forms seen in the surrounding landscape.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 Alt 1 Opt A	
Opt A				
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.3
Proposed	6.1	6.0	6.0	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating		OV-4 Alt 1 Opt A
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3

Visual Impact Rating		OV-4 Alt 1 Opt A
Resource Change (RC)		-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) $= [(Absolute\ value\ of\ RC) + VR] / 2, \text{ with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.}$		-3.3

OV-4 Alternative 1 - Option B (0.5 TO 1) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.0) – Vividness would decrease due to the flat, engineered look of the proposed rock cut. The lack of texture to the rock face would be less unique and memorable as seen from passing travelers on US 395.

- Intactness – (6.1) - Intactness would slightly decrease due to the engineered look of the proposed rock cut seen on the left. This obviously built element would visually detract from the generally natural surrounding landscape.
- Unity – (6.2) – The unity rating of this option as seen from OV-4 would remain similar to the existing conditions. The geometric profile of the rock cut would be inconsistent with the other rounded forms, however this would be generally off-set by the increased visibility of the existing rock formation seen in the middle-ground.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 Alt 1 Opt B		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.3
Proposed	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.1
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.2

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-4 Alt 1 Opt B
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-4 Alt 1 Opt B
Resource Change (RC)	-0.2
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.3

OV-4 Alternative 1 - Option C (1.5 TO 1) - Proposed Condition

- Vividness – (5.5) – Vividness would be most noticeably reduced as the angle of the rock formation is cut back to 1.5:1. This rock formation is one of the dominant land features that make views from this location highly memorable.
- Intactness – (5.6) – Intactness would moderately impacted. The engineered look and larger size of the rock cut face would reduce the natural look of the setting.
- Unity – (5.8) – Unity would be negatively affected by the angular appearance of rock cut. The composition of this view is composed of rounded rock formations on the immediate left and right, with a similar rock formation in the middle-ground. Cutting into the rock would affect this visual balance.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation				OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 Alt 1 Opt C
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.3
Proposed	5.5	5.6	5.8	5.6
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.7

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-4 Alt 1 Opt C
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-4 Alt 1 Opt C
Resource Change (RC)	-0.7
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.5

OV-4 Alternative 2 - Options A, B and C (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.2) – The close proximity of the rock formations would help the view retain much of its memorability. Vividness would remain very high. Although the roadway width would be slightly widened, the relationship between all the visual forms would continue to make for a highly memorable visual experience.
- Intactness – (6.2) – Intactness rating would stay similar to the existing condition since the introduction of man-made and non-typical visual elements would be minimal.
- Unity – (5.9) – The unity would remain the same. The composition from this view would still consist of natural complimentary elements such as rock formations, the aspen grove, mountains and native vegetation with the linear roadway leading into the central vanishing point.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation		OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3		
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.3
Proposed	6.2	6.2	5.9	6.1
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.2

Viewer Response (VR) Rating	OV-4 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3

Visual Impact Rating	OV-4 Alt 2 Options 1, 2 &3
Resource Change (RC)	-0.2
Viewer Response (VR)	6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = $[(\text{Absolute value of RC}) + \text{VR}] / 2$, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.	-3.3

OV-4 Alternative 3 – (Avoid Rock Cut and Wetlands) - Proposed Condition



- Vividness – (6.2) – The close proximity of the rock formations would help the view retain much of its memorability. Vividness would be somewhat reduced by the removal of the row of trees closest to the roadway on the right, although the remaining grove would minimize the visual effect.
- Intactness – (6.1) – Intactness rating would stay similar to the existing condition since the introduction of man-made and non-typical visual elements would be minimal.
- Unity – (5.8) – The unity would decrease due to the removal of trees closest to the proposed edge of pavement south of the roadway. This would have a minor effect on the overall composition however since the remaining adjacent trees would continue to provide visual attributes similar to the original grove.

Resource Change (RC) Evaluation			OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4 Alt 3	
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	(=V+I+U/3)
Existing	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.3
Proposed	6.2	6.1	5.8	6.0
Visual Quality Difference =				-0.3

Viewer Response (VR) Rating		OV-4 Alt 3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3

Visual Impact Rating		OV-4 Alt 3
Resource Change (RC)		-0.3
Viewer Response (VR)		6.3
Visual Impact (See note below) = [(Absolute value of RC) + VR] / 2, with plus or minus sign applied to the resulting numeral depending on whether the resource change (RC) was positive or negative.		-3.3

1.5 SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS

The quality of the existing visual environment through the project area is very high. The scenic mountainous terrain covered with a combination of waist-high shrublands with patches of tall pine forests provide for a mix of focused and expansive views of the surrounding landscape. The Devils Gate rock formation acts as the main focal point and provides a visual gateway with landmark characteristics for travelers entering the narrow Huntoon Valley towards the east and the wide open

Wheeler Flats to the west. The close viewing proximity and resulting spatial characteristics of the Devils Gate rock, combined with its interesting rock textures create a memorable and highly scenic visual resource for the region and interregional traveler alike.

Based on the high visibility of the Devils Gate rock formation immediately adjacent to the highway, along with the substantial number of potential viewers, the project site is considered to have a high degree of visual exposure to the public. US 395 has been designated as the Eastern Sierra Scenic Highway within the California Scenic Highway System. Aesthetics and Scenic Resources for US 395 are also discussed in the Mono County General Plan, indicating a high level of sensitivity to the visual quality along the highway corridor and within the project vicinity.

The project proposes three design options which would excavate into the Devils Gate rock formation, and one alternative which would avoid the formation by realigning the highway to the south. Each of these proposals would alter the existing visual environment to some degree, however the ratings analysis shows that of these alternatives/options, Alternative 2 (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) would result in the least amount of visual impact. Following is a summary of the visual effects of each of the project alternatives/options, listed in order of least impacting to most impacting:

Alternative 2 Options A, B and C (Avoid Rock Cut and Aspen Trees) – This alternative would avoid the Devils Gate rock formation and Aspen tree grove entirely. Since the formation is a primary contributor to the high visual quality and character of the site, avoiding it would result in no potential visual impacts to that resource. Visual changes would still occur with Alternative 2, due to the widened shoulders and slight road alignment. These visual changes would however be minor. The widened shoulders would be common to all of the alternatives and options, and would not appear out-of-place along the US 395 corridor.

Alternative 3 (Avoid Rock Cut and Wetlands) – This alternative would avoid the Devils Gate rock formation entirely. Since the formation is a primary contributor to the high visual quality and character of the site, avoiding it would result in no potential visual impacts to that resource. Visual changes would still occur with Alternative 2, due to the loss of trees along the eastbound roadside, and the widened shoulders. These visual changes would however be minor, since the remaining trees at the site would continue to provide a similar vegetative character to the corridor. Revegetation efforts, if implemented would also mitigate for the loss of vegetation. The widened shoulders would be common to all of the alternatives and options, and would not appear out-of-place along the US 395 corridor.

Alternative 1 – Option A (Vertical Rock Cut) – Option A would result in visual impacts due to the introduction of the large engineered slope-face and the increased viewing distance from the roadway to the rock. By cutting the rock vertically and constructing it somewhat closer to the roadway than

the other two cut options, this option would retain some degree of the spatial characteristics of the existing rock formation. As a result, the visual impact ratings show that of the three options which cut into the formation, Option A would result in the least visual impact. Measures such as rock sculpting and staining, if implemented would somewhat reduce the engineered, unnatural appearance of the excavated rock face. However even with these measures, Alternative 1 – Option A would result in substantial residual visual impacts.

Alternative 1 – Option B (0.5:1 Rock Cut) – This option would also result in visual impacts to the site. Similar to Option A, the impacts would be caused by the large artificial cut slope face and the loss of spatial characteristics due to moving the rock face further from the viewer. Option B would lay the cut face back slightly, which would also increase the visible surface area of the cut. In addition, laying the slope back would require a larger catchment area along its base, placing the cut somewhat further from the road than Option A. As a result Option B would cause incrementally greater visual impacts than option A. Measures such as rock sculpting and staining, if implemented would somewhat reduce the engineered appearance of the excavated rock face. However even with these measures, Alternative 1 – Option B would result in substantial residual visual impacts.

Alternative 1 – Option C (1.5:1 Rock Cut) – Option C would result in the greatest amount of visual impacts of the proposed alternatives. Because Option C would cut the rock slope back at a 1.5 to 1 angle, the visible area of the rock face would be larger than the other options. At this slope-angle the spatial relationship between the road and the rock formation would be substantially altered. In addition the lower slope angle would require even greater catchment area at the base of the slope, and an increased distance from the rock to the roadway. Measures such as rock sculpting and staining, if implemented would somewhat reduce the unnatural appearance of the excavated rock face. However even with these measures, Alternative 1 – Option C would result in substantial residual visual impacts.

Table 2. Visual Resource Change Numerical Rating Table

The following table summarizes the numerical difference between each project alternative and the existing conditions. These ratings show that Alternative 2, Options A, B, and C would result in the least amount of adverse visual change (-0.10). The visual change ratings are considered along with the high degree of viewer sensitivity for the project.

ALTERNATIVE /OPTION	OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 1	OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 2	OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 3	OBSERVER VIEWPOINT 4	COMBINED IMPACT RATING
ALT. 1 OPTION A (VERT. CUT)	- .27	- .27	- .27	- .27	- .27
ALT. 1 OPTION B (0.5:1 CUT)	- .40	- .53	- .47	- .20	- .40
ALT. 1 OPTION C (1.5:1 CUT)	- .93	- .93	- .77	- .67	- .82
ALT. 2 – OPTIONS A, B & C(AVOID ROCK CUT AND ASPENS)	0.0	- .2	0.0	- 0.2	- 0.10
ALT. 3 (AVOID ROCK CUT AND WETLANDS)	0.0	- 0.30	0.0	- .30	- .15

1.6 MEASURES RECOMMENDED TO REDUCE VISUAL IMPACTS

The following measures would reduce the project's potential visual impact as seen from US 395 and the surrounding area. The primary intent of the following measures would be to partially mitigate the effect of the project caused mostly by the unnatural, engineered appearance of the rock excavation and by the loss of trees.

Mitigation measures applicable to all project alternatives and options:

1. Throughout the project, preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. Use prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques which save the most existing vegetation possible.
2. All disturbed areas within the project limits not specifically designed as rockfall catchment areas or as recoverable surfaces should be graded to appear as natural as possible. Natural-appearing roadside grading should include broad, random undulations, gently-rounded transitions between adjacent slope-faces and varied planar surfaces.

Additional mitigation measures applicable to Alternative 1, Options A, B and C:

3. Disturbed rock surfaces shall employ rock-sculpting in order to create textured slope-faces similar in appearance to the existing natural rock formation surfaces seen in the vicinity.
4. Following rock sculpting, disturbed rock surfaces shall be colored to reduce noticeability and to match the appearance of the weathered rock formations seen in the vicinity.
5. Rock sculpting and coloring shall be designed and approved in consultation with the District Landscape Architect.
6. During on-site rock excavation and coloring, the District Landscape Architect shall be present and provide recommendations to the Resident Engineer regarding approval of project aesthetics.

Additional mitigation measures applicable to Alternative 3:

7. Any trees removed should be replaced at a type and ratio determined by the Caltrans Biologist and District Landscape Architect, in consultation with applicable Resource Agencies as required. Replacement trees should be planted as close to the area of impact as possible considering safety standards.